

# 'Mother and I Slept in Hall's Study Quite Often,' Says Charlotte Mills

"She Never Had a Chance to Be Happy and Her Life Was a Daily Drudgery"

(Editor's Note: In previous absorbing chapters of her story, Charlotte Mills, daughter of the slain woman in the Hall-Mills murder mystery, has told of her early life in her drab little home in New Brunswick, N. J. She related how her mother turned to the church for consolation in her life of drudgery. Today she tells of the growing bonds of friendship between her mother and the Rev. Edward Hall, with whom she met her fate on a lonely New Jersey farm.)

## MY OWN STORY of My Mother's Love and Murder

BY

*Charlotte Mills*

I USED to have strange feelings about my father. I don't blame father for not making money. People have to be as they are, I suppose. But I used to wonder why he had so little education. Schools were free. You could always study and read and find out things if you worked at it. Mother did.

I remember once she came home from a Ladies' Aid meeting or something and said she had heard a word she didn't understand. It was "Mizpah," and she went right away to look it up in the dictionary. Then she hunted for it in our encyclopedia. She came back and told me it was the name of a holy place mentioned in the Old Testament, and that the word got to be used later as a sort of "good-by sentence" meaning, "The Lord be with thee and me while we are absent one from another."

We both thought that was beautiful.

As I grew up, mother was more and more my chum. She was only seventeen years older than me, anyhow, and we had the same way of looking at things and the same likes and dislikes, only she was smarter. She had a lively mind. She loved to read about people and countries and she would always be imagining what Europe looked like, and even Japan and China. She used to make up stories about places and tell them to me as if they were really true—and then laugh and say, "I'm just making it up; like to think about it."

### Mother Loved Church

Things at our house got worse, or at least they seemed worse to me, perhaps because I was getting old enough to realize how badly off we were and how hopeless everything was.

My father was a shoe-cutter and he had been working in a shoe factory in New Brunswick. It moved to Brooklyn and they wanted father to go along. He would have gone, but mother wouldn't leave New Brunswick. It was her home, she said, and her family was there and all her friends.

But, most of all, she didn't want to leave the church. As I look back now, I know that the church was her life. She had nothing else but drudgery and disappointment, not a thing. She told father he could go to Brooklyn and she and I would stay in New Brunswick and he could

come out and see us when he wanted to.

Father wouldn't go without us. I really think it was my brother Dan more than mother and me. He has always cared tremendously for Dan, and so have all the Mills family. Perhaps Dan is more like them, and mother and I are like the Reinhardts. Anyhow, we never could get along very well with the Millses. We always felt somehow they thought of us as German, and I know they think everything English is simply perfection.

### Mother's Confidante

In these days I had more and more understanding of mother and how dreary her life was and how lonely she was in her heart. She never had a chance to be happy, mother didn't. Just housework and being poor, and father having no ambition or ideals or anything she cared for, and us children to bring up, and no future, and she wasn't strong.

She confided in me and told me her thoughts and how she prayed I would have "some kind of a future." She used to beg me not to marry anybody until I was sure I loved him and that he was the right kind of man.

"Be something, Kid," she used to say, "have some kind of a life; don't live as I've had to. Do you understand me?"

And I did understand.

Every once in a while mother would get an idea and try and fix up the house a little better. But always there wasn't money enough to buy anything. Father couldn't see why we wanted anything. Mother and I would go window shopping together.

One day we saw a framed picture. It's the picture you often see; I think it is by a famous



Charlotte Mills weeping as she gazes at the portrait of her mother, Mrs. Eleanor Mills (upper center), who was slain with the Rev. Edward W. Hall (upper left), at a love tryst. Mrs. Hall, the rector's accused widow, is depicted below Hall.

painter. It shows a little boy lying on his back on a hillside, shading his eyes with one hand and looking straight up into the sky, dreaming.

"That is just like Mr. Hall," mother told me. "He has described how he used to try to think things out when he was a boy on a farm. He tried to think out what life was all about and how he would ever get things for his two sisters and his mother, for he didn't earn much and they wanted a great many things."

Mother bought that picture on part payment and when she owned it all she gave it to Mr. Hall. He hung it up in his study at the church and said it was exactly like his own boyhood and took him back. Later on he thought it best not to keep it there, so he gave it back to mother and she kept it in our room. I have it now.

Mother and I had one room

and my father and Dan another. Dad's bed wasn't comfortable, so mother and I went out to buy a new one. The stores charged so much that we had to buy the bed on installments. I'll never forget the day they delivered it, with the mattress and everything. Mother and I hid it in the garret, and didn't dare bring it down till it was all paid for, for fear of what father would say. We knew from experience. It was always trouble, trouble, trouble about money.

We used to get sick over the quarrels.

Once we had an awful time over a wicker chair. The chairs in our parlor were old and rickety. Mother and I saw a wicker chair in a store window and wanted to buy it, but mother didn't have enough even to pay an installment.

Well, anyhow, mother saved enough out of the housekeeping money to make a payment, and

we got the chair home. When it was paid for at last, we brought it down, and then the heavens pretty nearly fell.

That night mother and I went over to the church and slept in Mr. Hall's study, in two chairs. Even mother and I got quarreling. She wanted me to sleep in the big comfortable chair, and I wanted her to take it. We ended up by her sleeping in the big chair half the night and I the other half.

That wasn't the last time we did that. We did it a good many times, whenever there were bad rumpuses at home, and we couldn't bear to stay there under that roof.

(Copyright, 1926, Famous Features Syndicate, Inc.)

Tuesday: Charlotte Mills tells how she begins to suspect that her mother and the Rev. Hall love each other.